

congratulations to a distinguished American military service member on the occasion of his retirement. Major Charles Ivan Bithos, of Kansas City, Kansas, has served the United States since 1974, serving in the Army, the Army Reserves, and the Army National Guard. Major Charles Ivan Bithos has been awarded numerous medals and honors for his exemplary service and dedication to the United States Armed Forces.

No other group of Americans has stood stronger and braver for our democracy than troops and our veterans. I strongly commend and appreciate the sacrifice that individuals such as Major Bithos have made in the name of protecting and defending the United States.

In honor of this great occasion, I am proud to share my admiration for dedicated public servants such as Major Bithos and offer both him and his family my most sincere gratitude for his service.

IN RECOGNITION OF MICHAEL J. PARSONS, NEWLY ELECTED BOARD MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FEDERAL CREDIT UNIONS

HON. SHERWOOD BOEHLERT

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 20, 2006

Mr. BOEHLERT. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to recognize Michael J. Parsons, the President/CEO of First Source Federal Credit Union on his recent election to the Board of Directors of the National Association of Federal Credit Unions (NAFCU). Mike Parsons has been a vocal supporter of credit union issues at both the state and national levels.

Mike's election to the NAFCU Board is just one more in a long list of accomplishments that has spanned 13 years as President/CEO of First Source Federal Credit Union, including his previous service as District President for the New York State Credit Union League.

As the President/CEO of First Source Federal Credit Union, Mike has focused on ensuring that his members receive helpful, personal service that caters to the needs of individuals and their financial goals. Through his credit union, Mike Parsons continuously demonstrates First Source's commitment to the financial wellness of the entire community. Most recently, Mike worked to have First Source support the Mohawk Valley Contractor's Guild, described as an "incubator for the development of small contracting companies in inner city Utica."

Mike's involvement to improve the lives of others can be further illustrated in his commitment to the Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired, School and Business Alliance, the Community at Sunset, and volunteering with the American Heart Association and Upstate Cerebral Palsy Association.

It is because of the good work of Mike and others like him that the credit union movement enjoys the success it has today. Such service is the hallmark of the credit union movement and I wish Mike the best of luck in his new role as a member of the NAFCU Board of Directors.

SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL

HON. JIM McDERMOTT

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 20, 2006

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, it was with unwavering support for Israel, its safety, security and right to exist, that I cast a vote today against House Resolution 921. Hezbollah, not Israel, started this conflict with an ambush, and Israel has every right to defend itself. There is no doubt about that.

Nor is there any doubt anywhere about America's deep and abiding commitment to Israel.

A resolution in the House of Representatives will not change what the world already knows, but it might encourage what the world already fears: a wider war with greater casualties, undermining fragile but crucial support for Israel among Arab nations, and further endangering Israelis and other innocent civilians across the region.

I am especially troubled by the fact that H. Res. 921 goes far beyond reaffirming our unwavering commitment to Israel by declaring unlimited support for potential military action anywhere in the region. The resolution says we: "support Israel's right to take appropriate action to defend itself, including to conduct operations both in Israel and in the territory of nations which pose a threat to it."

This raises the ominous prospect that the House has given the administration a pre-recorded vote to support any action, at any time. Could that include a military strike on Iran's nuclear facilities? The resolution is a blank check, and we know that policy has failed in Iraq, and has only incubated further violence and terrorism.

No one can for one moment accept rockets in Haifa, Nazareth, or anywhere in Israel. But demanding that the Lebanese government rein in Hezbollah while bombs rain down on a variety of targets, some civilian, is not the answer.

Widening the war will inflame tensions, increase casualties and decrease any prospect for a permanent peace. The United States can best support Israel and the Arab world by vigorously pursuing an end to the violence, the resumption of a peace process and a commitment to unite the region to isolate terrorist groups and all who oppose a just and lasting peace for all people.

[From the Daily Star, July 19, 2006]

BACK TO BEIRUT, READY TO DEFY ISRAEL

(By Rami G. Khouri)

I must be one of the few people in the world trying to get into Beirut, rather than flee the city that is being bombarded daily by Israel, with explicit American approval. Israelis should grasp the significance of this, if they ever wish to find peace and a normal life in this region.

My wife and I were on a trip in Europe when the fighting broke out last week and we could not return directly to our home in Beirut. So we have returned to our previous home in Amman in order to find a reasonably safe land route back into Lebanon. I want to return mainly because steadfastness in the face of the Israeli assault is the sincerest—perhaps the only—form of resistance available to those of us who do not know how to use a gun, and prefer not to do so in any case, for there is no military solution to this conflict.

Of the many dimensions of Israel's current fighting with Palestinians and Lebanese, the

most significant in my view is the continuing, long-term evolution of Arab public attitudes to Israel. The three critical aspects of this are: a steady loss of fear by ordinary Arabs in the face of Israel's military superiority; a determined and continuous quest for more effective means of technical and military resistance against Israeli occupation and subjugation of Palestinians and other Arabs; and a strong political backlash against the prevailing governing elites in the Arab world who have quietly acquiesced in the face of Israeli-American dictates.

The Lebanon and Palestine situations today reveal a key political and psychological dynamic that defines several hundred million Arabs, and a few billion other like-minded people around the world. It is that peace and quiet in the Middle East require three things: Arabs and Israelis must be treated equally; both domestically and internationally the rule of law must define the actions of governments and all members of society; and the core conflict between Palestine and Israel must be resolved in a fair, legal and sustainable manner.

Because these principles are ignored, we continue to suffer outbreaks of military savagery by Israelis and Arabs alike, for the sixth decade in a row. The flurry of international diplomacy this week to calm things down was impressive for its range and energy. But it will fail if it only aims to place an international buffer force between Hezbollah and Israel, and leave the rest of the Arab-Israeli situation as it is.

Protecting Israel has long been the primary focus of Western diplomacy, which is why it has not succeeded. For decades now Israel has established buffer zones, occupation zones, red lines, blue lines, green lines, interdiction zones, killing fields, surrogate army zones, and every other conceivable kind of zone between it and Arabs who fight its occupation and colonial policies—all without success. Here is why: protecting Israelis while leaving Arabs to a fate of humiliation, occupation, degradation and subservient acquiescence to Israeli-American dictates only guarantees that those Arabs will regroup, plan a resistance strategy, and come back one day to fight for their land, their humanity, their dignity and the prospect that their children can have a normal life one day.

In the past two decades, with every diplomatic move to protect Israel's borders and drive back Arab foes, the response has been a common quest to strike Israel from afar—because the core dispute in Palestine remains unresolved. Three Arab parties to date have missiles of various sorts that can strike Israel from greater and greater distances: Iraq, Hamas and Hezbollah. All three have made the concept of buffer zones militarily obsolete and politically irrelevant. New buffer zones imposed by the international community to protect Israel, while leaving Arab grievances to rot, will only prompt a greater determination by the next generation of young Arab men and women to develop the means to fight back, some day, in some way that we cannot now predict.

Piecemeal solutions and stopgap measures will not work any more. Ending these kinds of military eruptions requires a more determined effort to resolve the core conflict between Israel and Palestine. This would then make it easier to address equally pressing issues within Arab countries, such as Hezbollah's status as an armed resistance group or militia inside Lebanon, which itself is a consequence of Israeli attacks against Lebanon and the unresolved Palestine issue.

In Israel's determination to protect itself and the parallel Arab determination to fight back, we have the makings of perpetual war. Or, for those willing to be even-handed for